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ABSTRACT

Single-parent families have increased dramatically over the past decade, and it is estimated that by 1990, half of all children will have spent at least some time in a single-parent family. This paper briefly reviews the literature dealing with some of the unique problems that single-parent, female-headed families face, including role overload, economic hardship, social isolation, feelings of loss and grief, and problems with the non-custodial parent. The effects of single-parent families on children are also explored, including behavior problems and depression. Several clinical vignettes are presented that exemplify some of the problems psychotherapists see when working with single-parent families. These problems and cases are viewed from a brief strategic therapy orientation model that assumes: (1) problems develop because of interactional rather than intra-psychic difficulties; (2) problems arise out of everyday interactions; (3) problems result from either over- or under-emphasis of an ordinary difficulty; (4) problems are maintained through repeated application of inappropriate or ineffectual solutions; and (5) interruption of inappropriate or ineffective solutions will eliminate the problem. (JAC)

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The Single-Parent Family: A Complex System

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The Single-Parent Family: A Complex System

Single-parent families have increased dramatically over the past decade as divorce rates have continued to rise. It is estimated that by 1990, one-half of all children will spend at least some time in a single-parent family (Glick, 1979). While most of these families are headed by women, single-parent custodial males have also greatly increased. Overall, the problems and issues faced during the divorce process and re-establishment of a single-parent household are complex and need much more research (Cashion, 1982; Hetherington, 1979).

The focus of this paper is two-fold. First, this paper will briefly review some of the unique problems that single-parent female-headed families face. Second, clinical vignettes will be presented that exemplify some of the problems psychotherapists see when working with single-parent families.

The problems discussed and cases presented are viewed from a brief strategic therapy orientation (Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch, 1974). The basic assumptions of this model are:

- 1) Problems develop because of interactional difficulties rather than intra-psychic problems.
- 2) Problems arise out of everyday interactions between people.
- 3) Problems are usually a result of either over-emphasis or under-emphasis of some "ordinary" difficulty.
- 4) Problems are generally maintained because of the repeated application of inappropriate or ineffectual solutions to

the difficulties.

- 5) Interruption of the ineffective solution behavior or inappropriate patterns of interaction will eliminate "the problem."

The Context: Problems Single-Parent Families Face

Corresponding to the increasing number of single-parent families in America is a growing interest and concern about their specific problems. Because of their altered marital status, many women with children find themselves with a number of problems with which they must deal; i.e., less income, more work and responsibility, loneliness, guilt, grief, and a certain amount of stigma which society attaches to the phenomena of divorce. Surveys conducted through various mental health services indicate that as single-parents, women have higher levels of anxiety and experience more depression than any other marital status group (McLanahan, Wedemeyer, and Adelberg, 1981). These studies indicate that single-parent mothers proportionately consume the majority of mental health services available (Guttentag, Salasin, Belle, 1980).

Role-Overload

The parent with young children may find this to be the most troublesome problem of single-parenthood. At a time when it seems that all emotional and physical reserves have been drained by the events leading up to and the process of divorce and/or separation, the single mother finds herself the head of a household with all its demands for maintenance. She may either find herself struggling to maintain a lifestyle that was based on

two incomes or one substantially larger than what she discovers she alone can generate. Or perhaps even more distressing, she may be forced to move and re-establish her home under considerably less comfortable conditions.

In addition to concrete demands to earn money, buy groceries, plan and prepare meals, supervise and care for children, the single mother becomes the sole focus of the children's need to process anxiety and stress (Beal, 1980; Weltner, 1982). She alone must be disciplinarian and rule-maker, and feels most acutely the sting of hurt, fear, and anger her children are experiencing.... all this without the relief of dilution or the benefit of support that another adult in the household provides (Weltner, 1982). Problems in a parent-child dyad can no longer be compensated for by a sympathetic other parent. By the same token the two-against-one approach to settling parent-child disputes is no longer available (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1975). Children experiencing the vicissitudes of divorce and adjustment to single-parent family life may exhibit their distress in a variety of ways; i.e., school problems, social dysfunctions, aggressive or disrespectful behavior (Beal, 1980).

Economic Hardships

In 1974 nine out of ten single parents were women and the median income of these families was only \$6,000 annually. According to the U.S. Census, in 1976 42% of white children and 65.6% of black children from female-headed families were living at poverty income levels (Cashion, 1982). Currently, the Aid to

Families with Dependent Children allowance is \$118 monthly for a non-working mother with two children. The food stamp allowance for the same family is \$183 monthly for a total of \$301. One can only hazard a grim guess at what \$301 can buy a three-person family today in an urban community (Wortman, 1981).

Single-parent mothers find themselves trying to find employment in order to meet financial obligations only to face problems of securing reasonable, adequate day care for their children.

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1979) found that children whose mothers return to work at the time of separation or divorce experience the loss of both mother and father and consequently are more likely to develop behavior problems. On the average, children from poverty stricken homes do not perform as well in school and as previously discussed children from female-headed single-parent families are more likely to be poor. As Cashion (1982) notes, it is imperative to consider the impact of lowered economic status as well as changes in family structure when interpreting the results of studies investigating the academic performance and emotional adjustment of children in different family contexts. Socio-economic status over and over has been shown to play an important role in mothers' attitudes about self and her life situation and it has been linked to children's problems in school and the potential for juvenile delinquency (Cashion, 1982).

Isolation

The isolation single-parent families experience impact both parent and child. Single-parents may become cut-off from

extended family and from their previous social network often times either in response to or as a function of pre-separation strife. The time and energy once available for the development and maintenance of such relationships may now be consumed by the demands of keeping their family intact. Single-parent mothers appear to be more susceptible to the stress and distress that accompany divorce and/or single parenthood because of fewer social and personal resources (i.e., friends, non-work related activities, memberships in organizations; Beal, 1980; McLanahan et al, 1981).

One way the single-parent mother may deal with post-divorce isolation is by reuniting (either physically or psychologically) with her family-of-origin. Through the construction of a support network composed primarily of her relatives the single-parent mother gains some measure of stability for her teetering family structure and a sense of much needed security and reassurance (McLanahan et al, 1981).

Other ways the single-parent mother may ameliorate the isolating effects of divorce or separation are through the establishment of an extended network of support composed primarily of new friendships, including membership in various community, civic and social groups or by attempting to maintain or re-establish a conjugal family configuration. This may be accomplished through continued close contact with the ex-spouse or with the establishment of new spouse equivalent relationships (McLanahan et al, 1981). Another way the family may deal with isolation is by the election of or voluntary co-operation of a

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child who assumes the absent parent's role. Each of these positions possess some potential problematic issues which may lead the family to seek therapy.

McLanhan et al (1981) found that the type of the social-support network the divorcing mother creates for herself and her family is mediated by a factor they termed the "role-orientation of the mother." They found that single-parent mothers tend to exhibit one of two role orientations: 1) "changers"— women who utilize the change in marital status as a vehicle for making other life-style and/or identity changes (usually professional), or 2) "stabilizers"— women who adopt behavior that maintains as much as possible their pre-divorce life-style and identity.

Stabilizers tend to construct small support networks composed almost exclusively of family members; that is parents, siblings, and children. However, some of these women include in their support network a few old friends and a significant male. The male was usually either the ex-spouse or a man who dates or lives with the mother. Changers tend to develop support networks characterized by new relationships especially with other single mothers along with old friends and relatives. These networks are more expansive and complex than those of the stabilizer mothers. Though a significant male might be included in a changer's network, mothers in this group tend to be less dependent on this relationship for emotional support and confirmation of self-esteem than the stabilizer group.

The social isolation experienced by single parents has a

tendency to further intensify parent-child relationships. This kind of fusion renders both parties less able to make independent adjustments (Beal, 1980). Dependency of this nature becomes most evident when families exhibit difficulty in managing anger. Anger which normally operates to maintain some distance between parent and child is now experienced by the family as threatening. Mother's often tenuous hold on child management coupled with an awareness of her child's vulnerability creates ambivalence in her about how best to deal with the child's distress. A child who feels abandoned by one parent may choose to suppress their own fury and frustration rather than gamble with their caretaker parent's love (Weltner, 1982). Young pre-school age children who do not have the social resources of older school age children or adolescents may be most affected by familial isolation (Beal, 1980; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1975).

The stigma of divorce also contributes to the isolation single-parent families experience. That somehow "happenings which befall some but not all individuals or families in some peculiar way are experienced as somebody's fault," summarizes how guilt and shame become attached to the phenomena of divorce (Schulman, 1981, p. 88). In societies where a family structure is considered deviant, it is the social environment rather than the family structure that becomes destructive to member's self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979). Stigma associated with a certain family structure is related to low self-esteem in children and as a result often children are labeled as "problems" even when problems do not exist (Hetherington, et al, 1977).

Loss and Grief

Whether by death, divorce, or separation, every member of the family experiences their own particular kind of grief at the loss of a family member. Each member must deal with feelings of loss and grief in response to the divorce but the family as a whole has to make adjustments to changes in the structure of the family as well. Some families deal with the loss and grief of divorce through avoidance and denial (Dlugokinski, 1977). As previously mentioned, self-denial may become a pattern for both parties in the parent-child dyad where each denies their own needs for the sake of the other.

Depression in various family members is one kind of grief reaction to the loss. Depression with its blunting effects and feeling of inertia can operate as an avoidance measure in dealing with the anxiety and pressure of making post-separation adjustments. The loneliness that results from divorce can often lead to the development of unhealthy dependencies. These dependencies, often formed precipitously, prevent the kind of change that promotes truly adaptive post-divorce adjustment. Children in an attempt to replace their non-custodial parent may attach themselves to teachers, peers, extended family members, or therapists in an attempt to meet their dependency needs. Some single-parents may involve themselves prematurely in another relationship, while others may only "pretend" to be divorced, while maintaining intense involvement with their ex-spouses (Dlugokinski, 1977).

Hetherington (1979) distinguishes between the short-term and

long-term effects of divorce. In the short-term immediately following separation and/or divorce the issue of loss and grief are particularly salient for the family. However, as her research indicates (Hetherington et al, 1976; 1977; 1979) most families are able to successfully cope with this. She therefore recommends treating families using a crisis model (Hetherington, 1979). However, when the family does not successfully cope with the loss and grief, several types of problems may develop as discussed above. Several cases will be presented later in the paper that exemplify this process.

The Non-Custodial Parent Relationship

Once a divorce has taken place and a custody disposition made, an issue becomes the type and degree of access or visitation between the child and their non-custodial parent. Rosen (1977) found that children actually prefer free access to their non-custodial parent rather than any type of regulated visitation.

In a study of 60 children and adolescents from divorcing families, Kelly and Wallerstein (1977) found that contact continues between significant numbers of children and their non-custodial parents. This five year longitudinal study found that over time the nature of the relationship between the child and their non-custodial parent increased in closeness and affection for many families. Visiting frequency or disruption of visitation was related to the age, sex and affective responses of the child. Kelly and Wallerstein utilized post-divorce counseling for the families and found that counseling appeared to

contribute to the continuity of the non-custodial parent-child relationship. Their findings indicate that post-divorce contact is not so strongly influenced by the quality or closeness of the relationship prior to the divorce but more by the actual divorcing process and its impact on the parent. Their data indicate that a new kind of relationship evolves between the child and their non-custodial parent. Similar findings are reported by Hetherington and her colleagues (1976; 1978; 1979).

Even the terms used to describe families where one parent retains custody of the children are evidence of the kind of black and white view taken regarding parenting following divorce. The term "single-parent" seemingly ignores the role of the non-custodial parent and "caretaker parent" overlooks custodial arrangements such as joint custody or shared custody where relegation of responsibilities is well-distributed between divorced parents. The term "one-parent" while technically accurate again denies the non-custodial parent's role (Schulman, 1982).

Effects of Single-Parent Families on Children

Children from single-parent families tend to be less compliant, exhibit more deviant behavior, and show a tendency toward developing depression later in life as compared to children from intact families (Beal, 1980; Derdyn, 1976). As noted earlier, however, this may be due more to economics than to family structure. However, children living in intact families where there is a high degree of contentiousness perform more poorly than single-parent family children (Beal, 1980). Shinn

(1978) reports that children from single-parent families, usually where the father is absent, demonstrate decreased cognitive function as measured by IQ, achievement, and scholastic tests. Shinn proposes that decreased parent-child interaction, financial hardship, and high levels of anxiety are what contribute to these children's poor test performance. Studies which compare single-parented children to children with step-fathers and those from intact families support the hypothesis that children's interaction with their parents promote cognitive development (Beal, 1980; Shinn, 1978).

Deviant behavior in adolescents from single-parent families has been related to the stress inherent in all parent-adolescent relationships. However, the poverty, decreased parent-child interaction, lower levels of self-esteem and the stigma of father absence which beset the female-headed single-parent family often operates to intensify conflict between parent and adolescent (Beal, 1980; Cashion, 1981). This seems particularly true for males as compared to females (Hetherington, 1979).

The issues discussed here by no means insure that psychological problems will develop in the divorcing family. However, an awareness of the full realm of adjustments the single-parent family must make highlights the areas where potential problems may develop and better equip the mental health practitioner to deal with any single person or aggregate of people affected by divorce or separation.

Clinical Issues

While research on single-parent families indicates that they

are not inherently dysfunctional nor do they necessarily result in problems for children (Cashion, 1982), there have been several recent clinical reports describing the "typical" problems that occur in single-parent families which require therapeutic interventions (Beal, 1980; Kaplan, 1979; Schulman, 1981; Weltner, 1982). These reports characterize the problems primarily from a structural viewpoint (e.g., Minuchin, 1974) or transgenerational viewpoint (e.g., Bowen, 1976; Carter and McGoldrick, 1980). Such problems as the parental child, blurred generational boundaries, scape-goating, and projective identification are described in these articles. We will present four cases that exemplify some common problems of single-parent families who seek psychotherapy. The cases will be conceptualized from a brief strategic therapy viewpoint (Watzlawick et al, 1974).

The Overburdened Family

The following case presents some of the problems that develop due to increased financial burdens and role-overload. The case is a good example of how a brief strategic intervention works well with these types of cases.

The T family included mother, age 30, daughter S, age 12, and daughter C, age 8. Ms. T had been divorced from S's father for 10 years and had been the sole financial support for the family. C's father never married Ms. T and neither father contributed to the support of the family.

The family was referred to our clinic by the county human resources department following an attempted suicide by S. The

suicide attempt occurred during a weekend in which Ms. T was out of town with her church group. Following the suicide attempt S was taken to an acute care facility by a neighbor.

In the initial interview Ms. T stated that she was shocked by this incident and had no idea S was feeling so bad. Ms. T described her relationship with S as a good one and reported that they had been very close. However, in the last 4 to 5 months S had been less open with her mother, her grades had dropped in school, and Ms. T indicated that S seemed anxious and agitated at times. Ms. T said she had tried to talk to S repeatedly, but S would not reveal what was bothering her.

Also in the initial interview it was apparent that the family had been under considerable financial strain. Mother had lost her job about 8 months ago and was now working in a much lower paying position. The family had to move to a smaller apartment in a "bad" part of town. Money was very tight with little left for social outings. In addition, Ms. T had ended a relationship with a boyfriend about four months previous, partly because of the children. (The boyfriend was "mean" to the children.)

In separate interviews with the children, both talked about the hardships because of mother's work situation and how they were worried about their mother and whether she could handle the pressures. S appeared depressed and particularly concerned about her mother. She mentioned off handedly that she wished she could go live somewhere else to be less of a burden to her mother.

When we reassembled the family the following reframe was

presented:

S's suicide attempt was framed as a loving sacrifice on her part to help her mother with their financial situation. If S were not around it would be less of a burden for Ms. T. Ms. T immediately appeared shocked and expressed disbelief that S would do such a thing. S also immediately began to cry and told her mother that in fact that is why she did it. We told Ms. T that we knew that this sounded very crazy to an adult, but that was a child's way of trying to handle the family problems. The family was instructed to go home and discuss this and return in three days.

On the following visit Ms. T indicated they had discussed the situation several times. She explained to S that she did not want S to leave and that she was capable of maintaining the family. S appeared much brighter and more energetic. S talked about how she had misunderstood her mother's concerns and felt better able to talk to her.

The family was seen again one week later. During this period Ms. T said that S had returned to her old self and they were doing much better. S smiled during this discussion and agreed with her mother.

Ms. T cancelled their next appointment and said they were doing well and would call if they needed additional help. Three months later the human resources department called to say that they had recently talked with the family and things were going well, S's grades had improved, there were no reports of any behavior problems with either child, and the family was planning

to move into a better apartment.

While a suicide attempt is not a common symptom, frequently children respond to family stresses with behavior which distracts or attempts to resolve the situation, such as running away from home, developing behavior problems, etc.

Unresolved Divorce Issues

The second case presents a family in the midst of dealing with the unresolved issues of a divorce, unresolved grief and loss issues, and non-custodial parent relationship issues.

Ms. S contacted the clinic because her son, K, age 13, was a behavior problem at home and at school. The mother had recently divorced (6 months ago) K's father following a marriage of nearly 20 years. K's sister, C, age 18, also lived in the home, but did not attend the interview.

During the initial interview Ms. S indicated K would not mind her or his teachers at school. He would argue with her about everything and he usually ended up yelling at her. He had even recently threatened to hit Ms. S. She stated that he had similar problems at school and was not motivated to do his school work. K agreed that he did not get along with his mother, but he said that his mother and the teachers "picked on" him. He stated school was boring, no fun, and the work was too hard. Ms. S also mentioned that she had more trouble with K following his visits with his father. Ms. S stated that the behavior problems started about five months ago, although K had been unmotivated for several years, "just like his father."

When we inquired about the reason for the divorce and about

her ex-husband Ms. S stated that "they had been fighting and yelling at each other for years and she finally got fed up with it!" She described the father as unmotivated, lazy, and asserted that he had never lived up to his potential. She stated that he would start a business and then get tired of it and let it falter. This issue had been a point of continued disagreement throughout their marriage.

We hypothesized that there were two major issues for the family:

- 1) Ms. S had some unresolved issues surrounding the divorce; namely she felt guilty and was ambivalent about ending the relationship and she had not worked out a comfortable post-divorce relationship with Mr. S.
- 2) K was caught in a "be spontaneous paradox" concerning his motivation for school work.

We presented the following reframe to the family at the conclusion of the initial interview:

K sensed that mother had not worked through her divorce and his behavior was an attempt to help mother not have to deal with the fact that Mr. S was no longer part of the family. We sent the family home and encouraged K to continue his current behavior until he felt mother could handle life without father.

The next week Ms. S reported that K was a little better; he had stopped yelling at her and they were arguing less. However, he still would not mind or do his school work completely. We inquired about the arguments more. Ms. S said they were usually around house-hold chores. She would tell K to

do something and he would ask why, say he would do it later, or say it was girl's work, at which point she would try to explain why he needed to do it. K would counter and Ms. S would explain again. This would continue until it resulted in an argument and Ms. S would either give up or do it herself. Ms. S had stated in the initial interview that she worked as a manager of an apartment complex. We asked her if she had similar problems with employees at work; her answer was NO. We then discussed how she handled her employees; to which she stated, "if they didn't do their job they were told one time, if they persisted they were fired." We sent the family home and told Ms. S to consider K as an employee and handle him like she would someone at work.

At the next meeting Ms. S casually mentioned that they had only one argument during the week. It ended when she told K to do it or he would be fired from the family. This session Ms. S again complained that K would not do his school work and that she always had to stay on his back to do it. He would frequently say it was too hard for him and that she needed to help him. We told Ms. S that we were going to ask her to do something that would be very difficult for her to do, would require a great sacrifice on her part, and we were not quite sure she was ready to try it. She assured us she would do whatever was necessary. We told her that we knew she wanted her son to do his best in school and, unlike his father, learn to do things on his own and finish them. To which she heartily agreed. We told her that in order for him to learn to do things on his own he would have to ultimately learn what it was like to fail, therefore, we told her to

completely stop helping him with his school work, including inquiring if he had completed it. If he asked for help or complained about the difficulty of the work she was to tell him to do it on his own and then ignore him.

The next couple of sessions were spent discussing unresolved issues Ms. S had with her ex-husband. Ms. S was instructed to contact her husband and fully communicate to him that the divorce was final, work out the visitation issues with him, and to tell him that she would handle any problems she had with K and that she expected him to do the same. She reported back that she accomplished all of the assignments and felt much better about the whole situation.

During the last session Ms. S still complained that K was not motivated enough for school, but she could not describe any specific problems. The arguments had stopped at home and at school and K was doing most of his school work and his grades had improved. Because of holidays there was a several week break in therapy. Ms. S was told to contact the clinic for another appointment after the break if she had any specific problems to work on.... She did not call again.

Tantrum Family

The third case presents a single-parent mother and young child who were struggling with unresolved issues about the divorce. As a consequence they formed an over-dependent relationship which interfered with their normal adjustment and growth.

A divorced, single-parent mother in her late twenties

brought her daughter, L, age 3 1/2, to the clinic because she was throwing temper tantrums, was difficult to manage, she had begun to call Ms. M names, and tried to spit at her. Her former husband was in the military in another city. He had re-married soon after their divorce. Ms. M indicated that she requested a divorce because her ex-husband was not around very much and he was having affairs. When she confronted him about the affairs she said he got very angry at her and would curse and threaten her. Ms. M and L lived in an apartment alone, although Ms. M's family lived near by and provided help.

Ms. M described L as "hard-headed and stubborn" and had a temper "like her father." Ms. M said that she had tried everything she knew to manage L, but nothing worked. This made her particularly mad because she was stuck with L, while she imagined her husband to be happy in his new family situation. Ms. M further complained that it was very difficult for her to work all day to support them and then come home to such a difficult situation. When we inquired if she socialized or dated any, she just looked tired and answered that she was surprised that we would even ask.

Intervention 1:

Ms. M had mentioned that she had tried putting L in her room when L threw a temper tantrum. However, this did not work because L would not stay in the room and they would get into another fight over this.

We told Ms. M that she had done an excellent job raising L under such trying circumstances. We thought she had helped L

develop a personality that was strong-willed and independent (rather than hard-headed), but L had not learned how to express this appropriately, just yet. We then complimented Ms. M on her method of dealing with the tantrum, but told her that there was just one small part missing. Ms. M should go to the hardware store, purchase a lock for L's door and install it. The next time L threw a temper tantrum, Ms. M should tell L that if she did not stop within 60 seconds she would have to go to her room. If L continued Ms. M should pick L up, take her to her room, and lock the door for 5 to 7 minutes. At which point if L had stopped she could come out, if not L should be left in her room for another period. Ms. M agreed to try this intervention and was scheduled for another appointment the following week.

During the next session Ms. M reported that L had only two tantrums and that she followed the plan and L stopped. We cautioned her that this might be the lull before the storm and to expect a relapse next week. Ms. M complained again that L continued to call her names which made her very angry. We told Ms. M to make up some non-sense words and when L called her a name to call L one of the non-sense names.

At the next session Ms. M reported that things were still going well. She said L had started a tantrum only once and at the threat of being placed in her room, stopped. We made an appointment for two weeks later.

Intervention 2:

When the family returned, Ms. M said things were worse than ever. L had been particularly difficult and angry the last week.

In addition, L had thrown such a horrible tantrum that it interrupted a date she had planned. Ms. M seemed very angry herself, but also seemed unable to express it. She again mentioned how she was stuck with this unruly kid, and wished she had some help.

From our point of view two issues seemed to be pertinent. First, Ms. M had still not resolved the anger and guilt she had about her divorce. Second, her over-involvement with L interfered with her socializing and dating.

We presented the following reframe to Ms. M:

L sensed that Ms. M was still angry at Mr. M for abandoning her and that L was expressing the anger for both of them. In addition, L somehow knew that Ms. M had not psychologically divorced Mr. M and thus interfered with her dates to help Ms. M not two-time her husband.

Ms. M at first looked incredulous but then began to cry. She talked emotionally about her feelings about Mr. M and the painful issues around the divorce. Ms. M did feel abandoned by her former husband and was extremely embarrassed by the divorce, particularly around her family. She said that when Mr. M quickly re-married, that she felt that that was the last slap in the face. We sent the family home on the following note: That if L sensed that her mother needed help in resolving or expressing her feelings about the divorce that it might be necessary for her to continue to throw temper tantrums.

In the next session Ms. M informed us that L had started with a couple of temper tantrums and name calling, but that she

quickly told L that she could handle her own problems and if she did not stop she would be locked in her room as before. We spent the next couple of sessions discussing issues about the divorce and how Ms. M might begin to socialize and date more. She responded very eagerly to these discussions and followed through with her plans for social time for herself.

At the last session Ms. M indicated that things were going very well. L had essentially stopped throwing tantrums, name calling, and spitting and seemed to be a much happier and content child. Ms. M had taken time for socializing and had gone on a couple of dates. She had plans to join a single-parent group at her church which would provide additional support and social time. At a two month follow-up, Ms. M indicated that she and L were continuing to do well and that she was now dating a man regularly.

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Notes

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